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PART I

FACTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN PHILADELPHIA

The most fundamental fact about unemployment in Philadelphia or any other American industrial center is that we know practically nothing about it. We do not know its extent; whether it is increasing; in what industries it exists; just what are the different causes that bring about lost time; nor just how unemployment affects the worker's standard of life, his work and his citizenship, as well as the efficiency of the plant. Not only do we not know, but we do not have any available information to which we can turn. So far as definite knowledge is concerned, we are still "up in the air."

The information collected by the various branches of government—national, state and city—is still most vague and general in character. Every ten years the representatives of the United States Census come to Philadelphia and collect figures which show for one year the number of wage-earners engaged each month in each separate industry.¹ The State Department of Labor and Industry at irregular intervals collects from a large number of representative firms a statement of the maximum and minimum number employed during the year, and the dates on which these high and low points in employment occurred.² Such information, while it is a step in the right direction, throws but the barest light on the extent, nature and causes of unemployment. The only local investigations have been made by the Consumers' League and by Phipps Institute. Since these investigations were not primarily concerned with unemployment, the information furnished on that subject is necessarily scanty.

The lack of definite knowledge goes deeper than the absence of public reports, statistics and investigations. A large percentage of employers have made little analysis of their own unemployment problem. They do not have available for their own or

¹ Twelfth U. S. Census, Vol. 8, *Census of Manufactures*, pp. 276-281.

² State Department of Labor and Industry, Bulletin on Variation in Employment.

any one's else use data or information which show the extent and causes of lost time in their plants. Until such information is collected, our knowledge of the causes and nature of unemployment will remain in a very nebulous state. Very few of the labor unions keep any record showing even the amount, much less the effect, of unemployment; and only a small proportion of the records that are kept are thorough enough to be reliable. Moreover, the unions are apt, as a matter of policy, to exaggerate the amount of unemployment in good times. Conversely, in bad times, the fear that the strait of the workers, if known, may be used as a favorable opportunity to lower wages, leads labor unions to conceal the real facts. Finally, the figures, even if complete, would present information for but a small minority of the total body of Philadelphia wage-earners.

The value of individual firms and of unions as sources of information is still further lessened by the hesitancy that many employers and some labor unions have of giving information to the public. The unions fear that the employer will find out something about the organization which he may use to its injury. The employers, as a rule, fear that information which may be used to their injury, will reach business competitors, employes, or some regulating government agency. Most of the information for this report obtained from employers has been secured under the promise not to mention the name of the firm or the individual. The results of this "hush" policy make the study of unemployment very much like a case of "blind man's buff."

Aside from these vague sources, Philadelphia's information about her own unemployment is confined to what appears in the newspapers or is passed around by word of mouth. Our ignorance is abundantly evidenced whenever the amount of unemployment rises above the normal, by the wide variation shown in the "estimates" of the number of unemployed that appear from one source or another. For example, during the winter of 1914-15, the estimates of the number of unemployed in the city ranged from 50,000 to 250,000. No one knew the accurate guess from the inaccurate one; no one could tell the honest guess from the one that was deliberately faked. We were at sea between the exaggerations, on the one hand, of the calamity howler, and the exaggerations, on the other hand, of the conscious preacher of

optimism. Small wonder that many sincere persons were at a loss to know to what extent the city was justified in resorting to ultra-heroic measures.

Not until the end of the summer months—long after the time for decision was past—was the public as a whole put in possession of information that gave a more definite idea of the extent of unemployment. In order to throw a little more light on the amount and sources of unemployment during the past winter, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company was invited, by Mayor Blankenburg, to conduct an unemployment canvass among the families of those who held policies in the company. The Metropolitan Company placed the City of Philadelphia under obligations to itself by agreeing to aid, and lent its splendid organization for the purpose. The canvass was conducted during the week beginning March 15, 1915, by the agents of the company from each of the company's branch offices.

In this study the agents of the company called on 78,058 families, in which were 137,244 wage-earners,—about 18 per cent of all the wage-earners in the city. Of the wage-earners canvassed, it was found that 10.3 per cent were entirely out of employment and that 19.7 per cent in addition were working part time.

Canvasses conducted in other cities by the U. S. Department of Labor Statistics point to the conclusion that the Metropolitan figures are typical for the entire city. If that be so, there were in Philadelphia in the middle of March, 1915, approximately 79,000 unemployed and approximately 150,000 part-time wage-earners. It is significant that the state of affairs as revealed by the above figures was less severe than in most other large cities where similar canvasses were conducted.

This canvass disclosed the fact that the textile industries and building trades furnished the largest number of unemployed; of whom over one fifth had been out of work over six months. In less than one fourth of 1 per cent of the cases was unemployment due to strikes or lock-outs.

THE PERMANENCY OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The absence of dependable information about our own unemployment limits discussion, in most instances, to general statements. Data can be used chiefly for purposes of illustration

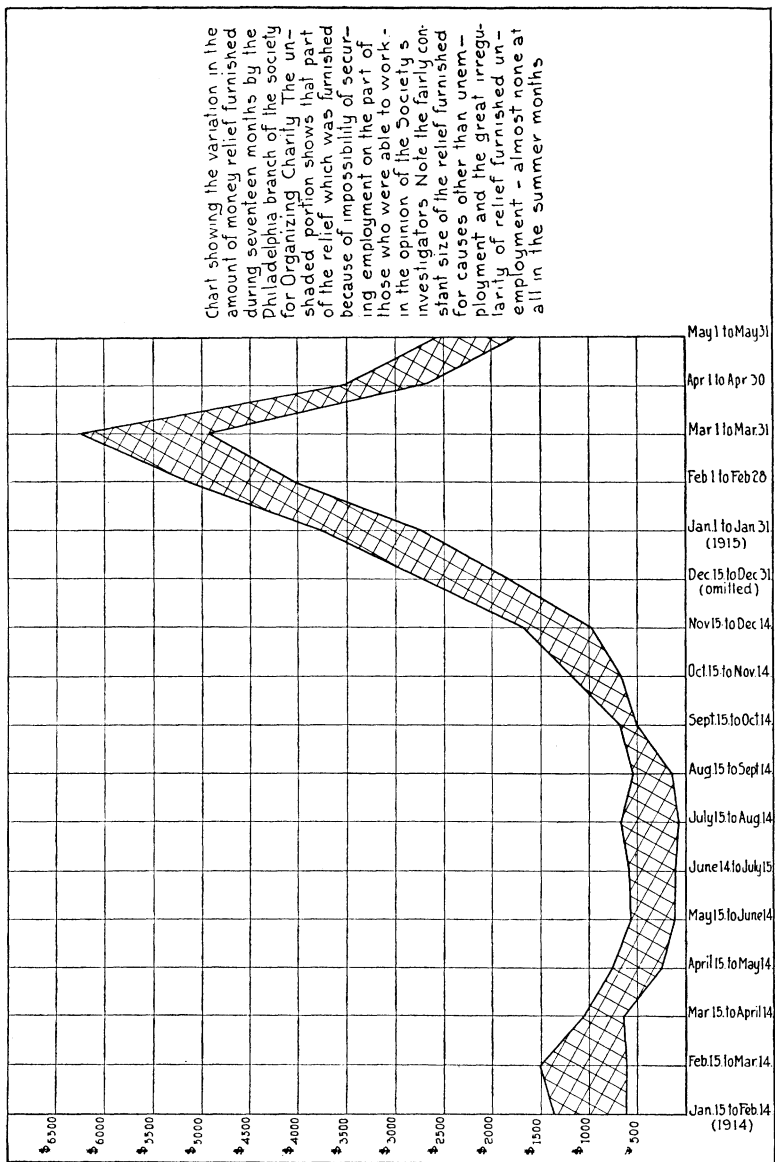


FIGURE 1

rather than as comprehensive summaries of an entire situation. However, this fact stands out: unemployment is permanent, if not steadily increasing. When we ordinarily assume that men and women who are willing and able to work are minus a job only in times of unusual and widespread industrial depression—such as we experienced during the last winter—we lose sight of the fact that there is always, even in the most prosperous times, a large amount of unemployment and part-time employment for these same workers. In the long run, this permanent or “chronic” unemployment totals larger than the unemployment of the severe industrial crises. This is true because the former exists continuously, year after year; whereas a crisis usually occurs only once in a period of five, eight or ten years. Moreover, from the city’s standpoint, this chronic unemployment is of greater concern because it arises chiefly from local causes.

The Society for Organizing Charity testifies that there is always in “good” years and “bad” alike, a considerable number of applicants for aid who, though willing and able to work, are forced to seek charitable assistance because of the impossibility of securing employment. Fig. 1 shows the total amount of relief granted by the Society for Organizing Charity each month during 1914 and to May, 1915; and, of this total, the percentage which was due to unemployment. In many cases, undoubtedly, other causes have contributed to throw these applicants onto charity after merely a brief period of unemployment; but this fact does not detract from the evidence shown by the chart of a considerable amount of unemployment always present.

As a result of over one hundred interviews with the managers of business houses and social workers, and as a result of studies made in individual industrial plants, information has been collected which indicates the permanence of unemployment. This also indicates roughly those industries in the city in which unemployment is normally a large factor.

A. The Textile Industry

Of Philadelphia industries, the textile and clothing manufacturing show unemployment and part-time employment at their worst. In the textile industries, the fact which immediately strikes the observer is that, although very many more workers are unem-

ployed in industrially "bad" years, yet there is always, even in the most prosperous years, a very considerable percentage of the workers who are either entirely idle or working from one to five days a week. Mr. R. R. P. Bradford, whose sixteen years' experience in charge of the "Lighthouse" (a social center for the better class of workers in Kensington) has given him an unusual opportunity to become acquainted with the facts, says:

We make the mistake of assuming that unemployment is a question solely of severe bad times. It is true that conditions are worse at such times—they even approach the destructiveness of a flood or an earthquake. But it is true that unemployment and part-time employment is a situation that is with us to a very considerable degree practically without cessation. If it is not one industry, it is another. If one mill escapes, another is hit. The fear of unemployment and part-time employment hangs, a permanent pall, over Kensington.

It is worth while to point out two general conditions that especially contribute to permanent unemployment in the textile industries. First is the constant shift of demand from one type of textile fabric to another. The industries that have been built up to supply products no longer demanded by the market must gradually die out, or readjust themselves to a new demand. During the decadence of these industries, the numbers of workers that have been attracted to the industry is greater than can now be kept busy. These employes hesitate to leave the industry for some other, probably uncertain and unaccustomed, line: conditions may improve in their own trade. Moreover, under existing circumstances in industrial plants, they feel that the skill acquired by years of work in their own trade will be sacrificed, and many are too old to risk the change. An excess of workers is, therefore, characteristic of a declining industry. A long period of part time and of unemployment, often running into years, results.

A second condition that contributes to irregularity in employment, and is very much more important now than it was twenty years ago, is the growing tendency—especially in hosiery, higher grade carpets and fancy dress goods—to manufacture solely "on orders." Twenty years ago a manufacturer made carpet or hosiery or cloth and then went out and sold *that* carpet, or hosiery or cloth. Today the order comes in for a particular design, with a certain kind of yarn or silk and a certain number of threads to the inch, and the manufacturer makes that particular order. Formerly a manu-

facturer produced standard makes of his particular line and simply piled up stock in his warehouse in the off-season. When the orders began to come in thick and fast, at the proper season, he was ready for them and simply used up his stock. Today manufacturers make, as a rule, very little to stock and run chiefly on orders. The result is that manufacturing has become nearly as irregular as the orders. When an order comes in, or especially when orders come in thick and fast at the proper season, there is a period of feverish activity until they are delivered, and then probably a long period of total or partial unemployment. A number of workers were interviewed in their homes in a block in which live the more industrious middle class workers in Kensington (hereinafter referred to as Block "K"). The experience of one man (a warper) in this block represents a situation prevailing in a large percentage of the textile factories.

"The second week after I was employed at, I was called on to work overtime four nights till 9 o'clock at night. On Saturday of that week, I, with four others, was laid off for lack of work."

The prevalence of unemployment is forcibly illustrated in the different branches of the textile industry in Philadelphia.

1. *Lace and Lace Curtains.* The last ten years has witnessed a steady increase in unemployment in the lace, and particularly in the lace curtain, business. There is no longer the demand for the lace curtains which fifteen years ago adorned parlor and bedroom windows alike. Consequently the lace mills have rarely worked full time during the last six years. The gradual decline of output is illustrated by the figures of one of the large lace mills in Philadelphia (see fig. 22)³. It is claimed that some mills contain a large number of expensive machines that have never been used. Since both the employers and the lace weavers' union attempt to distribute what work there is among as many workers as possible rather than assist a portion of the employes to new trades, permanent part-time employment results. A second feature of the lace industry is its extreme irregularity. A new style in ladies' garments may make a sudden demand for a large amount of lace. The United States Government may send in once a year a large lumped order for mosquito netting for the Panama Canal Zone. With

³ Figure facing p. 60.

plenty of machines and plenty of men already working part time or out on the streets waiting for a call, and a premium placed on prompt delivery, the firm rushes the order out in a short time—and the next month pay envelopes flatten out.

This condition of permanent unemployment among the lace workers is very generally testified to. The head of one of the largest lace mills in Philadelphia was asked whether, in his opinion, the lace and lace curtain workers had on the average worked three fifths of their time in the last five years. He said doubtfully, “*I think so.*” The doubt in his words and in his voice implied that they certainly could not have averaged much above that. A lace weaver interviewed in Block “K” asserted that he had been working five hours a day for the last five years. This statement was independently confirmed by neighbors. The secretary of the National Lace Weavers’ Association (one of the most intelligent and fair-minded labor men I have met) reports that, in his opinion, the average lace worker, in the last five years, has not made ten weeks altogether in which he worked full time.

Statistics of dues kept by the local Lace Weavers’ Union show the large amount of time that is lost by the lace weavers. The union has a graduated system for the payment of dues. Prior to January, 1914, a member who made over \$15 in any one week paid 75c. a week dues to the union. Members who made from \$7 to \$15 a week paid 50c. dues. Those who earned less than \$7 a week were excused for the week. In 1914, the wage limits which form the basis for the different classes of dues was changed. Since that time those earning over \$18 a week paid 75c. dues; from \$10 to \$18, 50c. dues; under \$10, no dues. To be excused in whole or part from payment of dues, a member must produce his pay slip each week. The dues paid for each and every week are recorded in the roll book. The records thus kept appear to be accurate and reliable. These records, therefore, show clearly what members received less than \$7 (or \$10), from \$7 to \$15 (or from \$10 to \$18) and over \$15 (or over \$18) per week. Both employers and employes testify that “almost any kind of lace weaver can earn \$20 a week if running full time, and they frequently make over \$30 a week if running full.” The vice-president of one of the largest lace mills in Philadelphia writes as follows regarding the full-time wages among lace weavers:

If all the weavers on the Nottingham lace curtain machines were divided into three general classes, low grade, medium and high grade, both from the standpoint of the ability of the weaver and the gauge of the machine on which they work, and bearing in mind that all Nottingham lace curtain machines run at the same speed whether fine or coarse, competently or incompetently managed, we believe the following would be a fair average earning:

Low grade Nottingham lace curtain weaver	\$18.00 per week
Medium grade Nottingham lace curtain weaver	21.00 per week
High grade Nottingham lace curtain weaver	24.00 per week

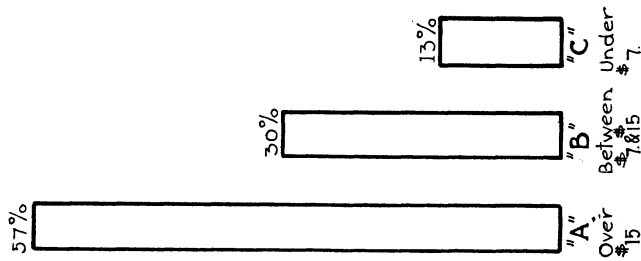
When it comes to a lace weaver, we cannot give the earnings with the same exactness, as a lace weaver may be skilled in one class of lace work and grossly incompetent in another. Most lace weavers have learned their trade in a locality making almost entirely one class of goods, and under the new condition of an American industry that must be resourceful to make any class of goods as styles may change we are encountering great difficulties. Aside from this fact, the weavers here are paid under a modified English card which puts a high rate on the bobbin fining goods for which England is preëminent and a very mixed card rate on the independent beam goods made almost entirely in France.

The best approximation that we can make we would report as follows:

Low grade lace weavers	\$20.00 per week
Medium grade lace weavers	25.00 per week
High grade lace weavers	\$30.00 to 35.00 per week

We would like it understood, however, that this is only an approximation, as on plain bobbin fining nets, which require less skill than perhaps any other class of goods, they sometimes get a weekly earning of more than \$35.00 per week. This is one of the contradictions of the card under which we pay.

The union roll book statistics, therefore, indicate roughly the amount of part-time employment and unemployment in the lace business. These statistics were compiled from the union's roll book, covering between 300 and 400 members. These records show that from January 1, 1909, to January 1, 1914, 13 per cent of the cases of members reporting showed a weekly wage of less than \$7; 30 per cent earned from \$7 to \$15 per week, and only 57 per cent earned over \$15 per week. This result is shown graphically in fig. 2. In other words, in only 57 per cent of the cases reported in all of the working weeks was anything approaching full time made in that period. In 43 per cent of the cases, three-quarter time or less had been worked; and in 13 per cent of the cases, the members must have worked not over one-third time. Since January, 1914, when 75c. dues were required only when the weaver earned \$18 or over, only 30 per cent of the cases have paid the highest dues. In other words,



Figures of the Phila. Lace Weaver's Union from Jan. 1st. 1909 to Jan. 1st. 1914. Chart shows for all the individual working weeks the percentage of cases in which was reported a weekly wage of

COLUMN "A" - over \$15.00
 COLUMN "B" - between \$7.00 & \$15.00
 COLUMN "C" - less than \$7.00

Recalling that "almost any kind of a lace weaver can earn \$20.00 a week if running full time" it becomes apparent how far the lace weavers as a whole fall short of attaining full time. Continuous full time operation during this period would have meant that COLUMN "A" would have included practically all of the cases save where sickness or voluntary absence of the worker reduced the wage scale. Since less than 3% of time ordinarily lost for these reasons, their influence in affecting the chart is negligible.

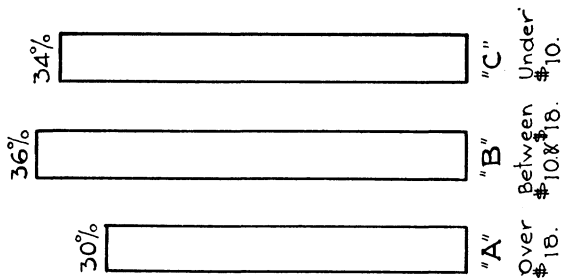
stated more simply this chart roughly means this! -

(1) In 57% (COLUMN "A") of the individual working weeks $\frac{3}{4}$ time or better may have been made.

(2) In 30% (COLUMN "B") of the individual working weeks, conservatively speaking $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ time was made.

(3) In 13% (COLUMN "C") of the individual working weeks, third-time or less was made.

FIGURE 2



Same as Fig. 2., save for the years 1914 and to June 1915. (The wage classification is slightly different from Fig. 2).

Stated simply this chart tends to indicate (1) In 34% (COLUMN "C") of the individual working weeks reported for 1914-1915, something less than half time was made. (2) In 36% (COLUMN "B") of the cases from half to nine-tenths time was made. (3) In 30% (COLUMN "A") of the cases was anything approximating full time made.

FIGURE 3

since January, 1914, anything like full time has been reported in approximately 30 per cent of the individual working weeks. Since January, 1914, wages of from \$10 to \$18 a week were reported in 36 per cent of the cases; and 34 per cent of the cases reported less than \$10 a week. In other words, stating it conservatively, in 70 per cent of the cases of individual working weeks during 1914 and to July, 1915, the weavers must have worked not over nine-tenths time; and in one third of the cases of individual working weeks reported, the time worked may have been none and could not have been over half-time.

The union statistics show also that the low dues do not come from a few particular individuals, but come fairly evenly from all—indicating that difficulty which all have in securing work, and not low earning power of a few, is responsible.

These results are shown graphically in fig. 3. Figs. 4 and 5 show for each week in the last six years and one-half the number of members paying each different class of dues. Since the lace-weaving trade is completely unionized, these figures represent the whole trade. It should be remembered that these figures include weavers only and that there are a great many others (about 5,000 in all) employed in the lace industry in Philadelphia. These running charts show great irregularity in the size of the groups earning the different classes of wages. Frequently, for a month, 80 per cent of the cases will report over \$15 per week. Shortly after, will follow a month in which only 40 to 50 per cent of the cases will report over \$15 per week, and from 10 to 20 per cent of the cases will report less than \$7 per week. Such extreme irregularity can be occasioned only by extreme irregularity in employment.

2. *Carpet.* The amount of unemployment permanently existing in the carpet industry, although relatively smaller than in the lace business, is very considerable. The rapid rise and fall of different branches of the same industry, which causes a long period of part-time employment in the decadent stages of an industry, is also marked in the carpet business. During the last 15 years, the development of cheap grass and other kind of rugs has led to the almost total extinction of the manufacture of "in-grain" carpet which was once the chief kind manufactured in Philadelphia. After a long period of part-time employment,

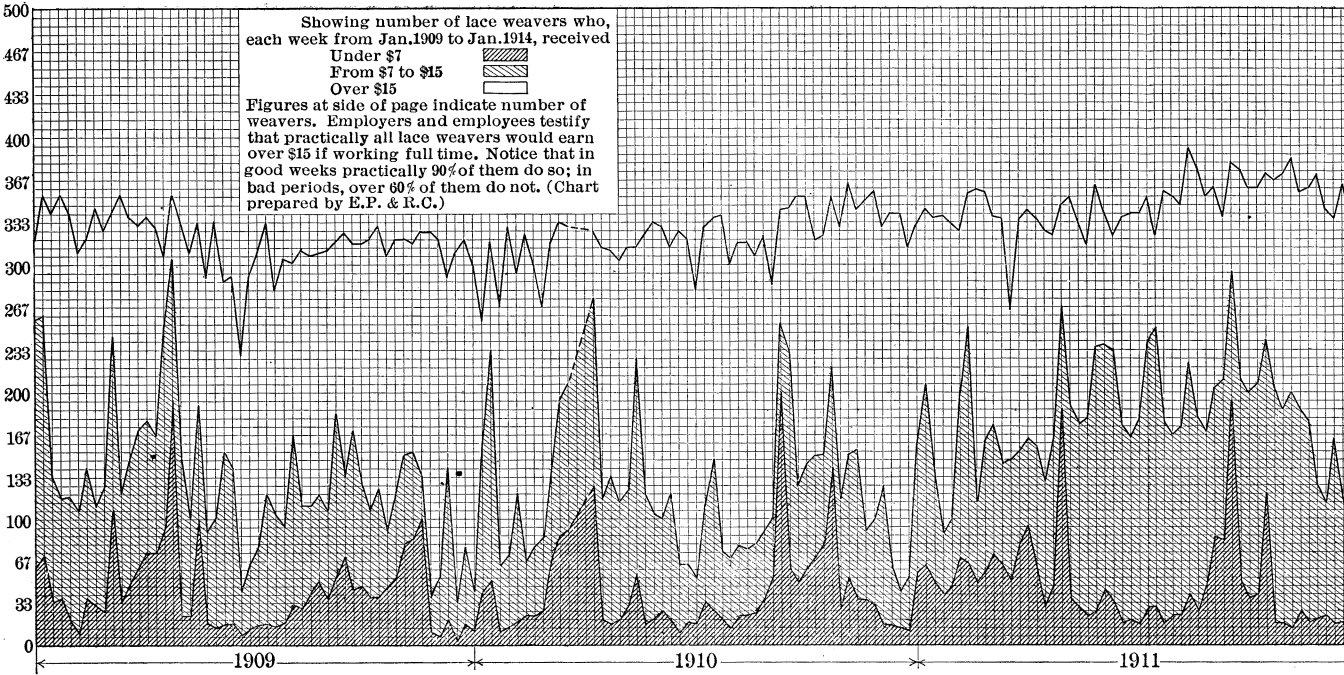


FIGURE 4

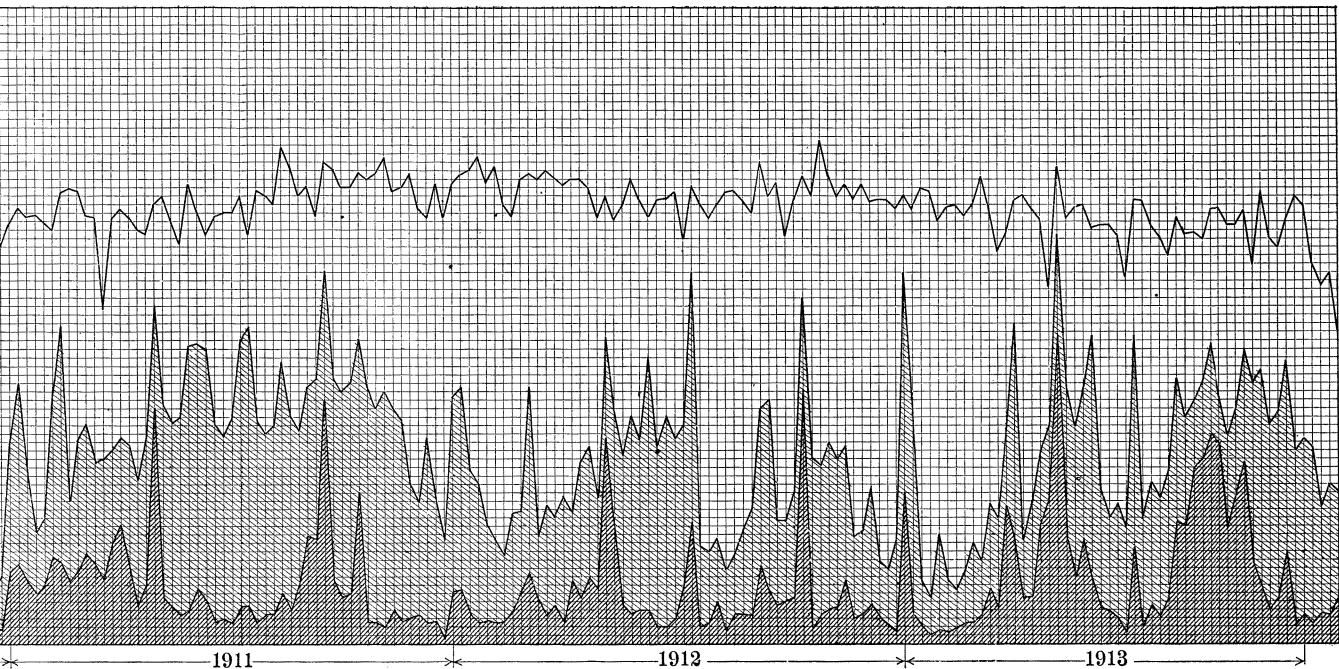


FIGURE 4

many of the firms who formerly manufactured "ingrain" carpet have either gone out of business, or replaced ingrain machinery with machinery to manufacture Wilton, Brussels, Axminster, or tapestry carpets and rugs. When rugs began to replace carpet in popular esteem, the Wilton and Brussels carpet manufacturing concerns grew busy, expanded and took much of the business away from the Axminster and tapestry carpet manufacturers. Recently the makers of Axminster and tapestry carpets have come to manufacture

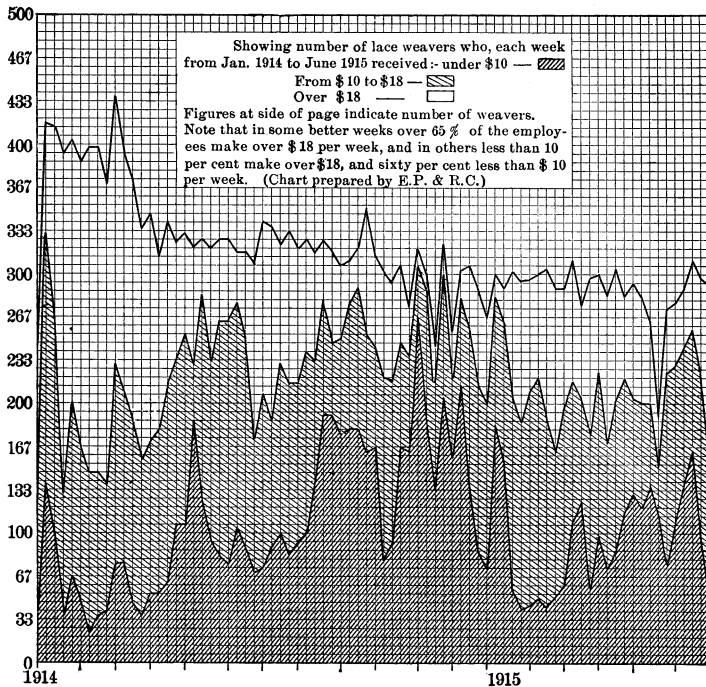


FIGURE 5

very satisfactory rugs. Since these rugs are cheaper than the Wilton and Brussels rugs, some of the trade has in recent years swung back to these firms.

The tendency to manufacture solely to order has served to increase the irregularity in production and employment. The manager of one of the largest Brussels and Wilton carpet concerns in Philadelphia says, "I can remember 25 or 30 years ago,

when we used to manufacture to stock in the off season. We would pile our warehouses full of stock; sometimes we had as much as \$100,000 worth piled up. Then when the season opened, we would hire all the carts and boys we could lay hands on and haul the stuff away to the station. Now we hardly manufacture to stock at all." For two months in the spring and two months in the fall this firm manufactures chiefly for samples. Charts showing the wide seasonal variation in the number employed and in the average wage per week in each department of this firm are shown in figs. 6 and 7. Note that in off seasons and off years, not only is the number of employes considerably reduced but also the *average wage* per employe. The records kept by the union in this industry furnish little or no measurement of the amount of unemployment. The secretary of the Weavers' National Association (with headquarters in Philadelphia) estimates that the union members of the industry have lost 25 per cent of their time in the last five years.

In order to throw light upon the amount of time lost through a period of years in one representative Axminster firm, an intensive study was made among the piece workers in a large well-known Kensington firm manufacturing medium grade Axminster rugs. (Frequent reference will be made to the facts secured from the study of this firm which will, hereafter, be referred to as Axminster Carpet Mill "A.") The records of this firm were kept in such a way that the amount of working time spent by piece workers in the mill could be ascertained. In no year since 1910 have the employes actually on the payroll of this firm failed to spend at least 21 per cent of the entire year's working time outside of the mill. During the entire period, 1910 to 1915, 28 per cent of the time was lost by the employes of this mill. Since less than 2 per cent of this lost time was due to vacations, we may assume that at least 26 per cent of the working time was lost for reasons other than vacations. The time lost through sickness or voluntary absence of workers did not amount to over 3 per cent of the total working time. The relation of time lost to time made each year is shown graphically in fig. 8. Nor does this measure complete the amount of unemployment occasioned by this one mill, because the time lost by employes in the mill waiting for material or other reasons is not included, nor is the time lost by those who

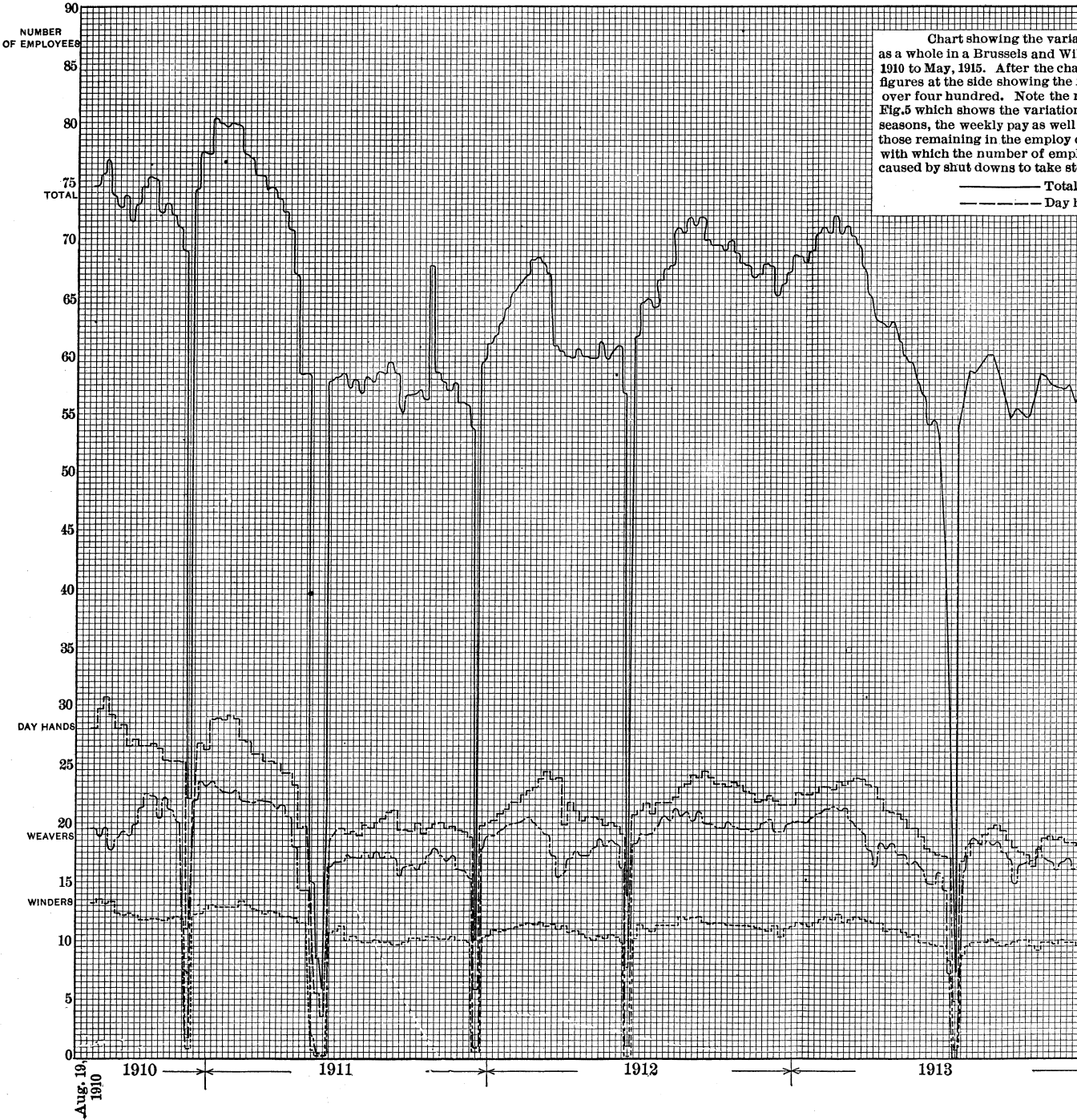


Chart showing the variation in the number of employees as a whole in a Brussels and Willebroeck textile mill from 1910 to May, 1915. After the chart was made the figures at the side showing the number of employees rose over four hundred. Note the marked seasonal variations in Fig. 5 which shows the variation in the weekly pay as well as the number of employees those remaining in the employment of the mill. The fluctuations with which the number of employees is affected are caused by shut downs to take stock of the mill.

— Total
 - - - Day Hands
 — Weavers
 - - - Winders

FIGURE 6

Chart showing the variation in the number employed by departments and for the mill as a whole in a Brussels and Wilton carpet and rug factory. The period covered is from August, 1910 to May, 1915. After the chart was constructed, percentage figures were substituted for the figures at the side showing the number of employees. As a matter of fact this firm employs over four hundred. Note the reduced force during the early summer months. Compare with Fig. 5 which shows the variation in the average weekly pay for the same mill. Note that in off seasons, the weekly pay as well as the number employed, is less. In other words, time is lost by those remaining in the employ of the mill as well as by those laid off entirely. Note the frequency with which the number of employees dropped almost to nothing for a week. This is usually caused by shut downs to take stock.

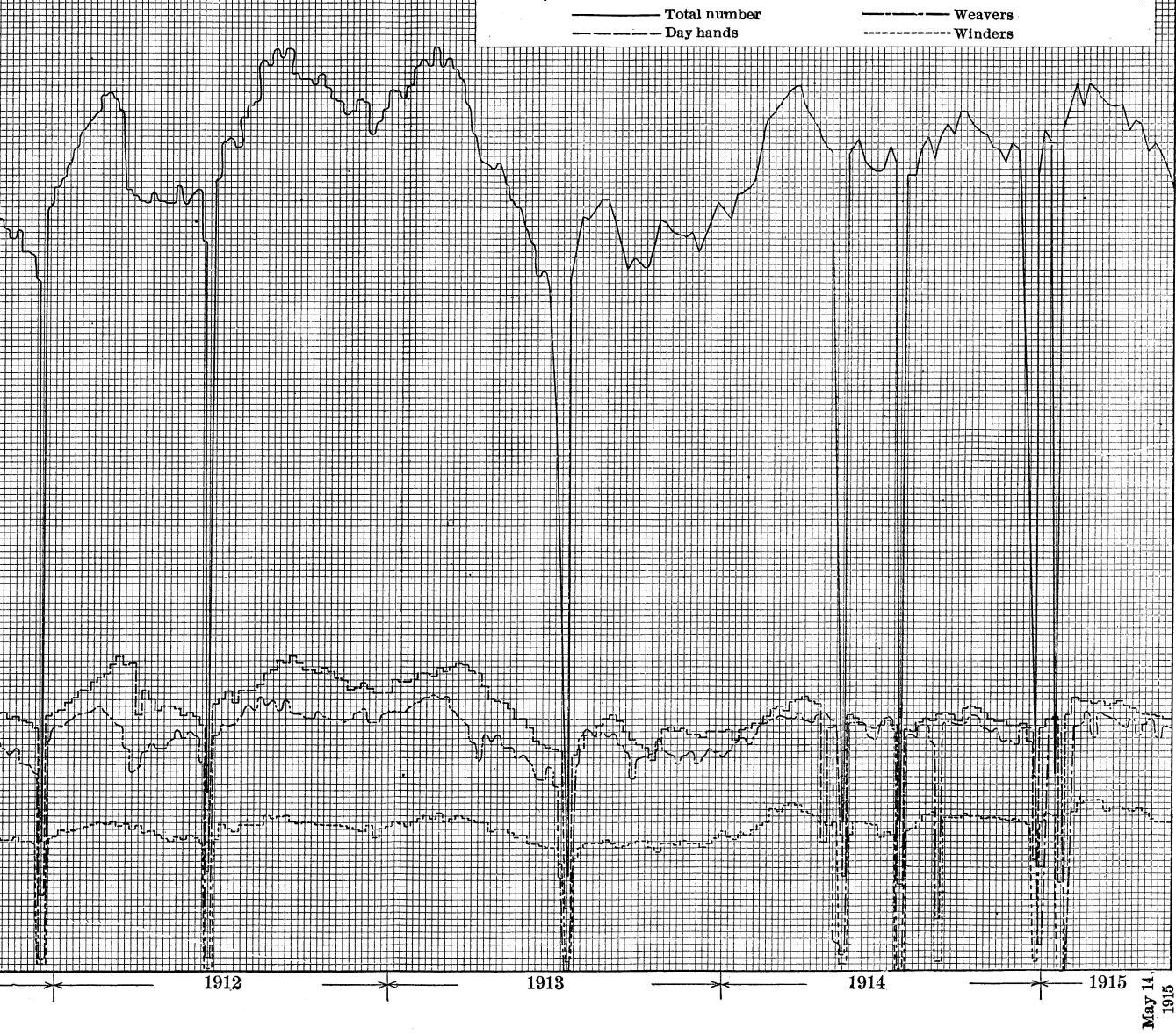


FIGURE 6

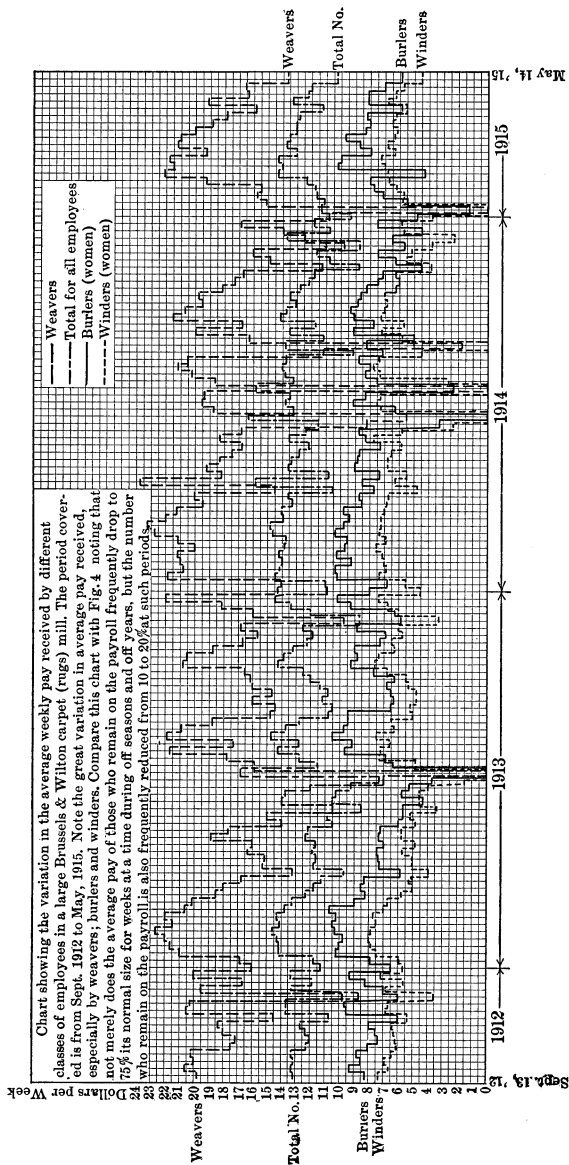


FIGURE 7

Chart showing for Axminster Carpet Mill "A"
 The percentage of each year's working time spent by those on the payroll, both inside (A)
 and outside (B) of the mill. This does not include time lost waiting for dye or other material
 in the mill nor the time lost by those laid off the payroll during bad times. Time lost is almost
 entirely due to irregularity or lack of orders, for the time lost because of holidays, illness, or vol-
 untary absence of workers amounts to less than 3% of the entire working time

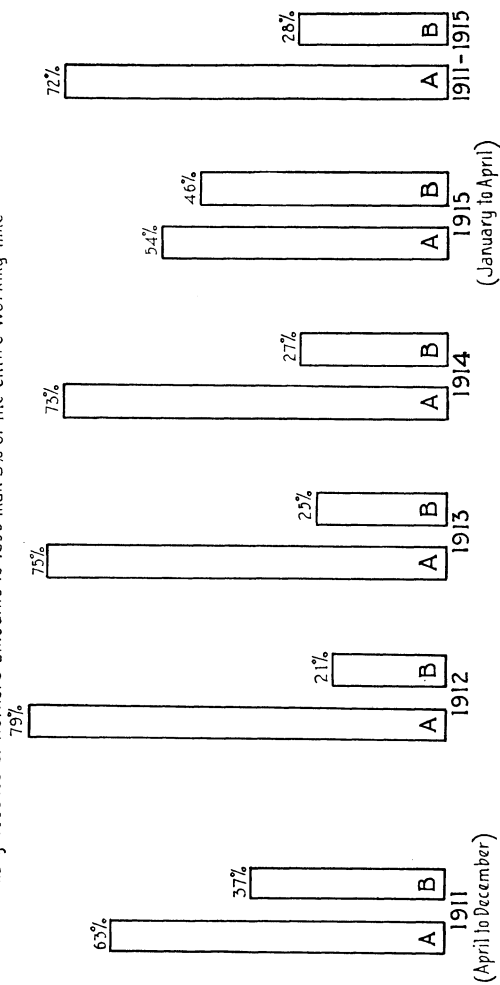


FIGURE 8

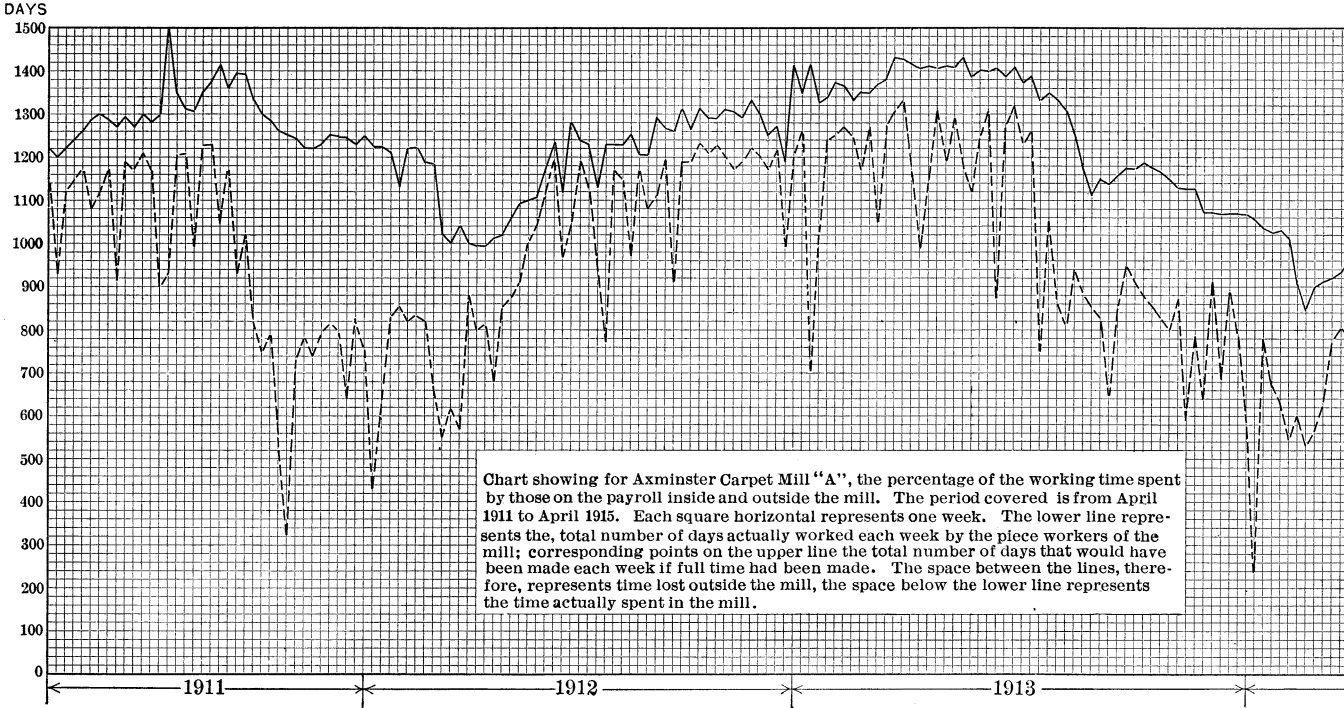


FIGURE 9

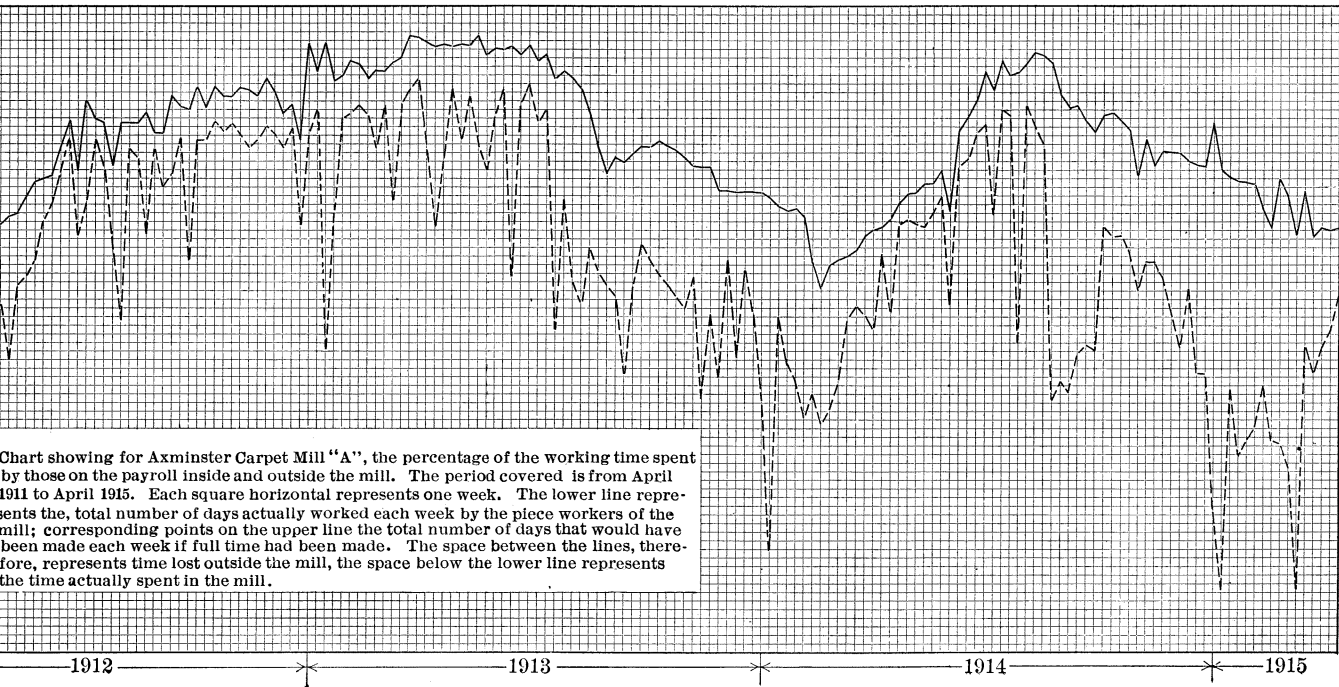


FIGURE 9

are laid off whenever times begin to grow slack. For example, the force was reduced 20 per cent from July, 1914, to April, 1915. Moreover, the time lost through daily and hourly interruptions, which were not considered of sufficient size to warrant the workers being sent to their homes, does not enter into these figures. Charts showing in detail the time lost each week in this concern is shown in fig. 9. Where conditions vary as widely as they do in the textile

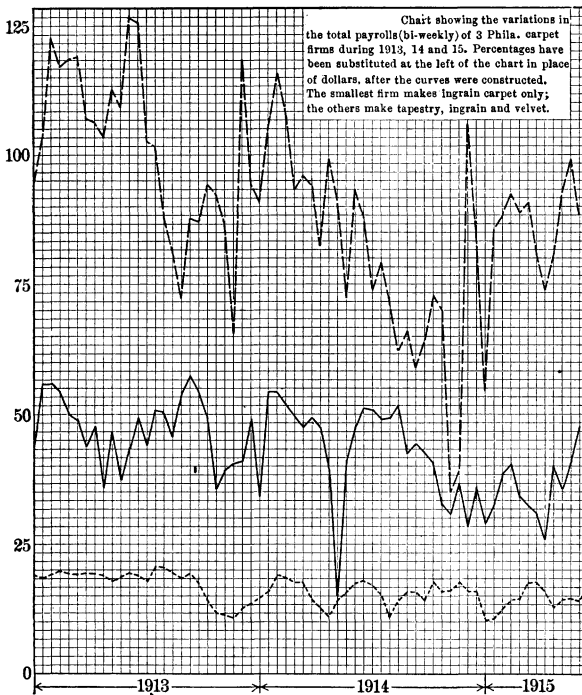


FIGURE 10

industry, it is impossible to say that the figures of any one mill are typical for all the textile industries. It should be remembered, however, that the conditions in this mill are among the most favorable for steady employment. The business is not highly seasonal and the goods are not so subject to the influences of extreme style, that the firm is forced to manufacture solely on orders. On the contrary, the articles are sufficiently well standardized to enable

the firm to make for stock up to the limit of its financial capacity, which is high. The experience and general ability of the management of this concern is above the average.

Figure 10 gives the figures showing the great irregularity in the payroll of a number of carpet firms from week to week for the last two years and one-half. Such constant irregularity as this in total payroll implies a considerable degree of irregularity in employment.

The number of wage-earners in the carpet industry in Philadelphia, and therefore the number affected by this irregularity in employment, is approximately 11,000.

3. *The Cloth Industry.* The cloth industry includes a wide variety of cloth products from cheap cotton and woolen print cloth through all kinds of worsted and woolen goods to women's and men's wear and fancy dress goods. The development of textile manufacturing in the South, with its advantages to the employer of cheap labor, has led the manufacture of cheap cotton cloth to be transferred to the South within the last 20 years. In the same period there has been a big falling off in the demand for cheap woolen cloth, which was once one of the big cloth items manufactured in Philadelphia. The high grade woolens and worsted are made chiefly in the big mills of New England. These considerations have led Philadelphians to become, to a considerable degree, manufacturers of "novelty" goods or fancy dress goods of various kinds. In a great part of this fancy dress goods business, production is exceedingly irregular because of the influence of style. The goods are not standardized and they depend on sudden veerings of style to create a new and sudden demand. When an order comes, rush delivery is demanded. When the order is filled, workers are idle. Many kinds of machines are required to manufacture the different varieties of dress goods. In many mills hands are trained to work on one kind of machine only. When a rush order comes it usually involves but one kind of weaving machines. The result is that workers on one set of machines will be working under high pressure, perhaps overtime; while workers on other machines in the same room are on the streets from lack of work. Two weeks later conditions may be reversed.

One small manufacturer of novelties reported that as a result of the above conditions he had not worked more than 50

per cent of his machines at any one time in the last three years. Some idea of the irregularity in employment in such a plant may be obtained from fig. 11, which shows the variation in the number employed and the variation in average pay per weaver at each two-weekly pay day since February 16, 1912.

The figures of another large well-known concern, manufac-

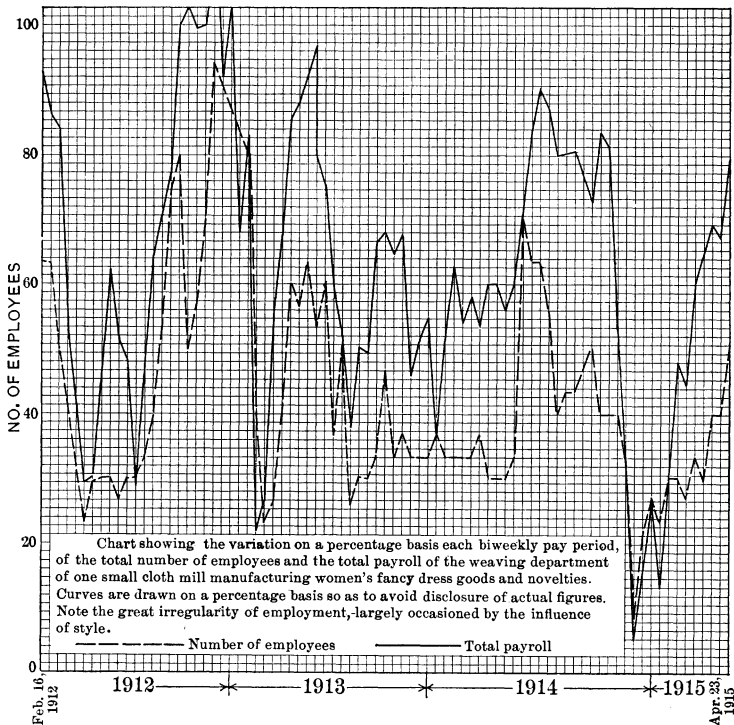


FIGURE 11

turing women's high-grade fancy dress goods, indicated also the extreme irregularity of employment in this industry. Fig. 12 shows the wide variation in the number of looms running each month from January, 1910, to June, 1915. It does not follow that the looms classed as "working" were running steadily during the months indicated. Figures for the period 1910-1915 show that, each month, on the average, 36 per cent of the looms did not

operate at all; 64 per cent were running, but not necessarily continuously. This result is shown graphically in fig. 13.

4. *Hosiery*. Lost time is normally less typical of the hosiery industry than of the three branches of the textile industry mentioned above. Even in normal, as well as abnormal

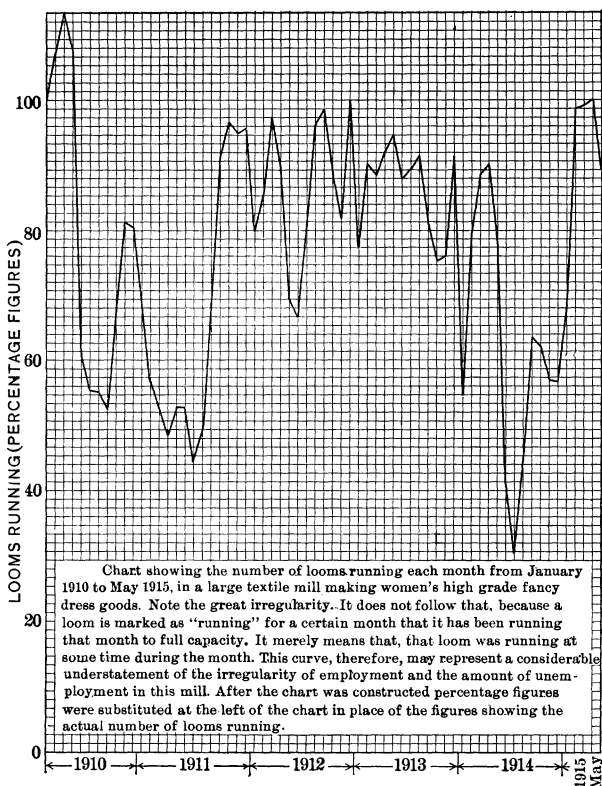


FIGURE 12

times, however, the business is characterized by considerable irregularity. This fact is brought out on the chart in fig. 25,⁴ which shows the variations in total payrolls of seven of the leading hosiery firms in Philadelphia for the last two and a half years.

In this industry a manufacturer may keep his girls busy on

⁴ Page 80.

stock in dull times if he desires, but his finishing department is thrown out, because goods can be packed only on order under present conditions (in most cases), because the manufacturer puts up goods under the jobbers' trade-marks. Conditions would be improved if all manufacturers agreed to manufacture under one trade-mark—his own.

This statement of conditions in the lace, carpet, cloth and hosiery manufactures touches but the high spots of chronic unemployment in the textile industry. In other branches of the industry—upholstery, for example—the conditions are just as characteristic.

B. The Clothing Industry

The clothing industry ranks with the textile industry in the seriousness of its unemployment situation. The men's and women's clothing manufacturers each employ approximately 15,000 persons in Philadelphia (mostly Hebrews), of whom the majority are women. The manufacture of women's clothing is the more irregular. Increase of unemployment here has been due to the same vagaries of style responsible for irregularity in the cloth business. Changes of styles have made it possible to manufacture only at certain seasons. The very rapid increase in the frequency of style-changes, that has characterized the last two years, has served to break up even the regularity of irregular seasons and substitute a business characterized by sudden spurts followed by unemployment—in an order so irregular that it is impossible to be predicted. The Women's Garment Manufacturers' Association reports that five years ago, if business conditions were normal, there would be two big seasons—a spring and a fall season. Of these two seasons, the fall season was much the larger. In both seasons, however, there was but one main standard style for each line of garments. In preparing for the fall season, samples were made up in April, and the salesmen went on the road with these samples in May. Work on the orders sent in by the salesmen was begun in the factories in late June or July. This season continued until Thanksgiving, with July and August as the busiest months. During December little was done in the factories, except to make up samples for the spring season. Salesmen went out "on the road" early in January. Orders began to come in at once; the

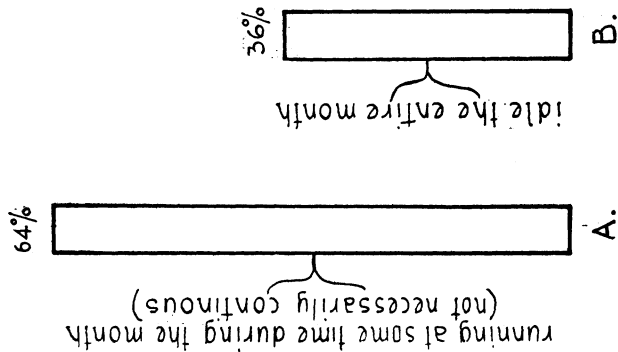


Chart showing for one of the largest dress goods manufacturing concerns in Philadelphia, the percentage of looms that, on the average, stand idle each month and the percentage which run at some time (not necessarily continuous) during the month. This chart is based on the average for 65 months, -Jan. 1, 1910 to June 31, 1915.

FIGURE 13

factories started and ran nearly to capacity until Easter. From Easter until June or July little was done except the manufacture of samples. It is estimated by the secretary of the Women's Garment Manufacturers' Association that during this off season in the spring, as well as during the fall (from Thanksgiving to early January), the plants ran less than 20 per cent of capacity. The description of the seasonal variation of employment is confirmed by the union. Formerly many of the least skilled help were laid off altogether during the off seasons. The rest of the help spent their time in the factories, working when an occasional garment order came in or simply waiting. On September 10, 1914, an agreement was entered into by the Garment Manufacturers' Association and the union that provided that whatever work there is during the off season shall be divided equally among all the employes in the unionized branches of the industry. The outcome is that, during the off seasons, approximately the usual quota of employes is in the plant, but they spend four times as long waiting for a garment to appear as they do working on the garment after it is in their hands. Not many of the employes secure any other work in the off season. A few get employment in the department stores during the Christmas rush.

During the last year or eighteen months, changes in fashion have become much more frequent. No longer has the rule "one style, one season" held. During the fall of 1914 there were four distinct changes. These were noticeable in the great variety of coats and suits worn by women. Styles followed on the heels of each other so fast that it was impossible for women to keep up.⁵

This situation means complete disorganization of whatever regularity there has been in an already irregular business. Buyers buy sparingly of each style in anticipation of a new one. The season is, therefore, very short. When a new style appears, there is another sudden batch of rush orders to be pushed out under high pressure—and then, stagnation. Two long seasons have been chopped up into a number of short seasons. It is now impossible for the wage-earner to know what pay he will receive, or for the employer to know what business is in sight for him. Neither can

⁵ It is asserted by those studying the unemployment situation in New York that it is impossible for the average employe in the women's clothing industry to work over 50 per cent of the time, because of the excessive irregularity.

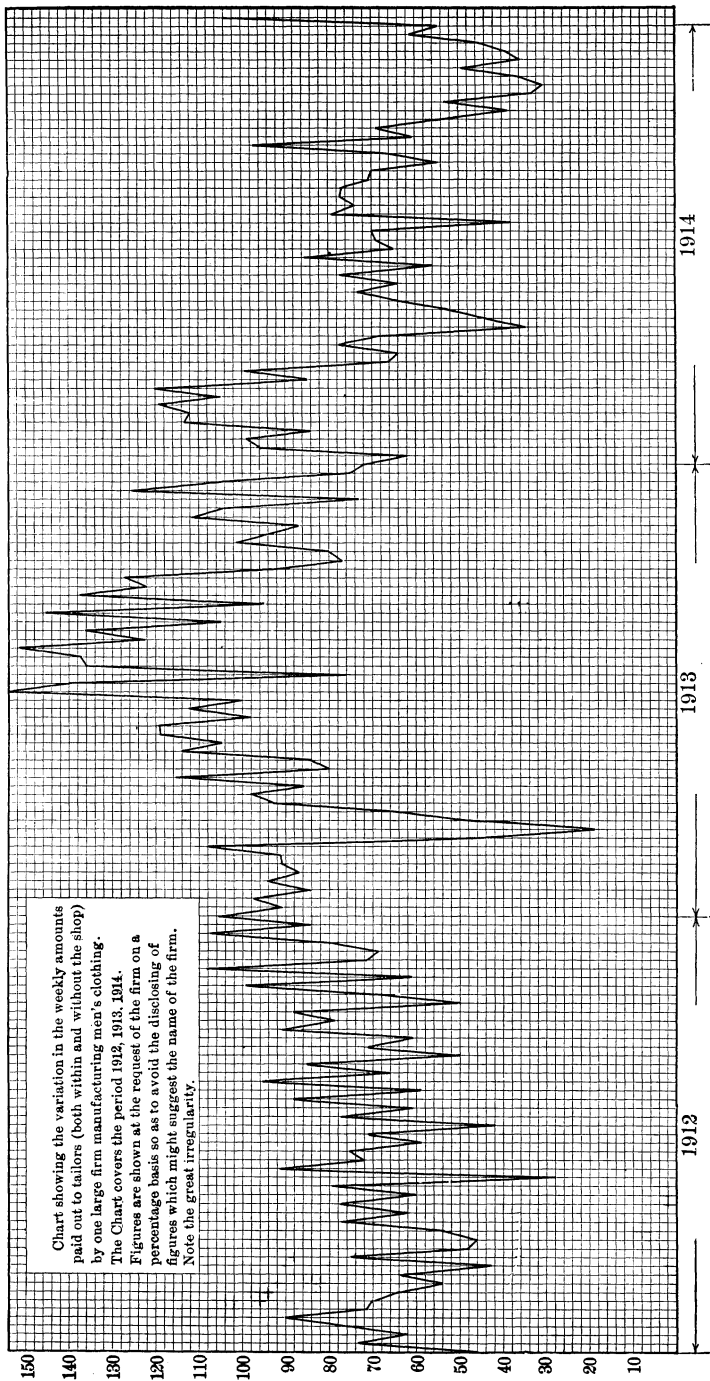


FIGURE 14

plan ahead. To attempt this and trust to hitting the next fashion is so unsafe as to be a gambling proposition. The statement of a ladies' dress goods manufacturer (in which business the situation is analogous) will describe the situation. "One year I took a chance and made up goods ahead of the style. I happened to hit it right and made \$85,000. I would hate to say what happens other times when I miss it." It is claimed by the secretary of the Women's Garment Manufacturers' Association that the introduction of idle periods into what was formerly a steady working period has added three or four weeks a year to the period of unemployment.

Both the union and the manufacturers' association report that an attempt was made during the last year to bring about an agreement among the manufacturers in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Cleveland, that they should decide on one style for a season and stand by it. This attempt to bring about stability in the business and to make employment more regular failed because of mutual suspicion among employers. Most employers claim that frequency of style changes is due to the two or three large manufacturers in New York, who set the style and change it often so as to increase sales of their own goods. Others assert that it can be charged to the large department stores who knock down a style shortly after it has been created, and set up another so that buyers will be stimulated to purchase over again, in order to "keep up with the style." The answer of each department store, of course, is that it is forced to follow the example of its competitors.

While the seasons in different branches of the women's garment industries do not coincide, all concerns lose a proportionately large percentage of the annual time. A manufacturer of ladies' shirt waists employing several hundred hands has the following to say regarding the irregularity of employment in that industry and the influence that extreme styles have on regularity of employment:

We run almost to capacity from January to June. From June to January we run at practically 50 per cent capacity. We are especially slack from June to October. Conditions used to be such that the irregularity always characteristic of our business was a constant thing which we could predict in advance. Knowing when it occurred, we could sit up nights and plan against it, and figure out some way to reduce irregularity in production and employment. We could furnish employment during our dull seasons by manufacturing to stock. Shirt-

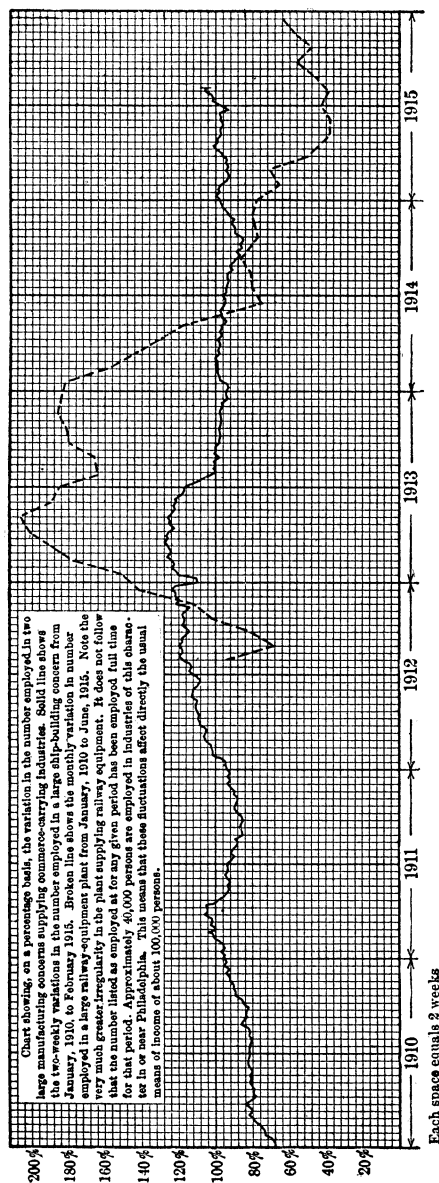


FIGURE 15

waists were fairly well standardized and there were no extreme styles. Orders would come in ten months before delivery was required, and the plant could manufacture fairly regularly since it could make up these orders whenever convenience demanded. Frequently we could make up stock in the off season till we would have 100,000 shirtwaists piled up which we would work off in the buying season. Frequently we would make from ten to twelve thousand waists without an order. We knew that the worst we would have to do would be to simply swap dollars. Nowadays, we rarely make over twenty-five garments without orders.

Although it is widely considered that men's clothing is so standardized that there can be little irregularity of production due to the variety of cloth and style, it is nevertheless true that the style-irregularity is only somewhat less than in women's clothing. The off seasons are less than half as long as the off seasons in the women's clothing business. How irregular the men's clothing business is, may be seen from fig. 14, which shows the weekly variation in the amount paid out by one large and representative men's clothing concern to tailors both within and without the factory. This represents the approximate variation in employment furnished.

One large manufacturer who makes a very high grade of clothing, a business which is subject to style changes, writes as follows:

Women's fashions play a more important part in dictating men's styles than ever before and, as a consequence, we have had more rapid changes in style than the average manufacturer does keep up with. These changes are not confined to the design of the garment alone, but the fabrics also, so that what applies to the clothing manufacturer might be said just as strongly of the fabric maker.

C. Industries Manufacturing Electric and Steam Railway Equipment and Ships

The third great industry that, in the long run, adds most to unemployment in the Philadelphia district is that group of industries which supply equipment to railroads and steamboat companies. The railroads and steamboat companies are notoriously irregular buyers. They buy in a lump. When conditions are favorable to them, they buy vigorously. When the reverse holds, these companies, especially the railroads, buy scarcely anything. Since there are in the neighborhood of 40,000 persons in these industries in and around Philadelphia, a severe curtailment of such purchases is sufficient to affect seriously, if not altogether

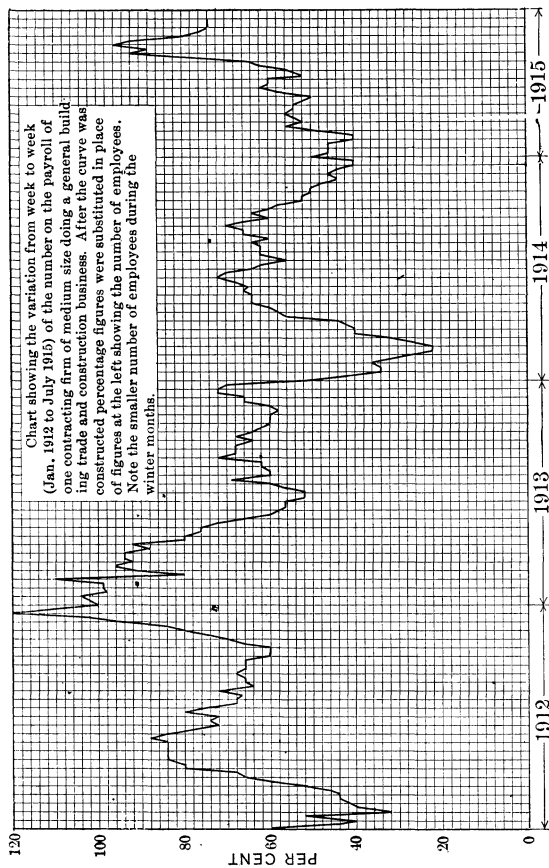


FIGURE 16

withdraw, the usual means of livelihood from a number of persons probably considerably in excess of 100,000. Cutting off the buying power of so many people is alone sufficient to create "hard times" in Philadelphia. This situation partly explains the statement of a prominent local manufacturer that Philadelphia is always either on the "top crest of prosperity or far down in the dumps." How irregular these industries are may be seen from a glance at fig. 15, which shows the variation in the number employed from month to month through a period of years in a large railway equipment plant and in a large shipbuilding concern.

D. The Building Trades

One of the few industries that is becoming less irregular than it used to be is the building industry. Formerly little was done from Thanksgiving until late in March. However, the use of cement is lengthening the open season for certain lines of building work. Cement, when heated, mixed with gypsum and protected by salt hay, is fairly safe from injury by freezing, even in the coldest weather. If general business conditions are good, the builders of factories and office buildings are coming more and more to show little regard for the weather by running straight through the winter (except for an occasional severe day)—witness the Ford Motor Company building at Broad Street and Lehigh Avenue. Cold weather is more to be reckoned with in the construction of houses and in street paving and sewer work. Not much work of this type is done from the middle of December to the last of February. The unemployment that results from this cause is less serious because the period is not long, is well known in advance, and can therefore be provided against. It is claimed that the influence of irregularity in work is offset, for the skilled mechanics, by a higher rate of wage. This, however, does not apply to the unskilled men, who are the hardest hit here as elsewhere. Some idea of the irregularity in the building trades may be secured by a reference to the fluctuations in employment of a representative construction company doing a general construction business, as shown in fig. 16.

E. The Longshoremen

It is a well-known fact that chronic unemployment exists among the longshoremen and dock workers in any large port;

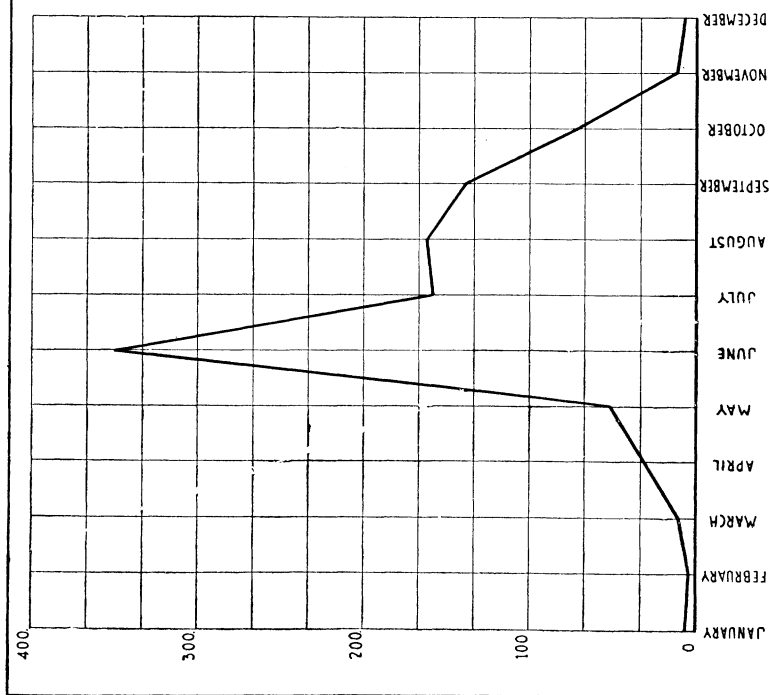


Chart showing the monthly variation in number employed on ten truck farms in South Jersey during 1914. Note the heavy demand for labor in summer and the almost complete absence of demand in winter. It is this irregularity in demand that takes thousands of Italians from Philadelphia during the spring and summer, — to return again in the winter when the city's industries are normally at the lowest ebb, and are therefore, least capable of absorbing this labor.

FIGURE 17

and these conditions hold among the negroes and Poles and south-east-European dock workers of Philadelphia. In the absence of exact statistics, the statements of superintendents of labor of steamship companies and the heads of docking concerns throw the best light on unemployment among the dockmen. The head of one stevedore firm says,—“If every steamship company were employing today as many dock-hands and longshoremen as it employed on its busiest day last year, one-half of the dock labor would still be idle.” Another says,—“I do not believe that the dock-hands average over two days a week.” Although the wages per hour are relatively high,⁶ the time lost is so great that the average weekly wage is low. In view of this lack of statistics for Philadelphia dockmen, the statement of the situation in New York may be taken as probably fairly typical of Philadelphia. Both employers and employes in New York testified before the Federal Industrial Relations Commission that the men earn on an average of from ten to twelve dollars per week. This irregularity tends to produce shiftlessness and dissipation in the workers.

F. Agricultural Labor

Agriculture is one of the most notoriously irregular industries in its demand for labor. This is particularly true on the farms that lie to the east and south of Philadelphia, in the sandy coastal plain portions of New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. In these sections, the chief products raised are truck and vegetables. The cultivation and harvesting is done by hand to a much larger extent than is the cultivation and harvesting of most farm crops. As a result, South Jersey and Delaware have a very high demand for labor during the summer and fall. The extra demand Philadelphia and Baltimore are called on to supply. Every summer, whole families (chiefly Italians) migrate to the fields of South Jersey and Delaware in late May or early June, as soon as, or even before strawberries are ripe. Many of these families migrate from one section to another as the different crops in different sections ripen. Some remain till the end of the cranberry season late in October. These families then return to Philadelphia. After a bad winter, this exodus to the truck and berry field

⁶ Thirty cents per hour, forty-five cents per hour for overtime up to midnight, and sixty cents for overtime after midnight and Sunday.

helps to relieve Philadelphia's unemployment problem. Stated the other way, however, although many of those returning in the fall to Philadelphia find employment in clothing factories, construction gangs, etc., it is apparent that these returning thousands are dumped on to the city's labor market just when winter is approaching and when the industries are least able to absorb them.

The extent of the irregularity of employment on the truck farms may be seen from a curve showing the variation in employment on truck farms in South Jersey during the year 1914. Letters of inquiry were sent to a large number of farmers selected at random in South Jersey. The curve in fig. 17, showing the monthly variation in employment on a number of truck farms in South Jersey during 1914, was constructed from the answers received from these inquiries.

Closely akin to the irregularity in the demand from South Jersey and Delaware for agricultural labor is the demand of the fruit and vegetable canneries for practically the identical kind of labor. The South Jersey, Delaware and Maryland section is one of the biggest centers in eastern United States for the canning of fruit and vegetables. The majority of these canneries, which employ thousands of hands at the height of the season, run from two to five months every year. A large part of their help is drawn from Philadelphia and Baltimore in the spring and return there in the fall.

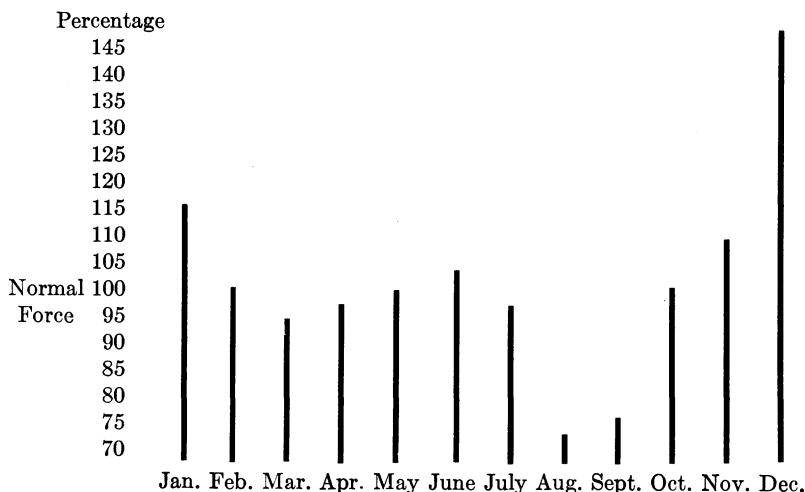
G. Department Stores

Employment in department stores is characterized by a considerable amount of seasonal irregularity. The high season occurs from Thanksgiving till Christmas. After the Christmas rush the number of employes usually declines until the last of February or March. During April and May the number is slightly increased in order to handle the sales of goods for the summer season. Employment during the summer season falls off, the low points being reached during July and August. The situation in the department stores is very well summarized in a study made by the Philadelphia Consumers' League, and published as a bulletin of the State Department of Labor and Industry:

REGULARITY OF EMPLOYMENT

The following chart, showing the variation from the normal in the number of employes in one large department store, at different seasons, shows a condition which is probably true of the four other large stores. The month of May, when this store considered its force about normal, has been taken as 100 per cent.

Percentage Fluctuation by Months in the Working Force of One Store



The month of December shows a 42 per cent increase in the normal force and August a 27 per cent decrease. This indicates plainly the number of temporary and intermittent department store workers at the command of any large store for busy seasons. Many girls work in the stores from September until Christmas eve or until January first, when a falling off of trade demands a cutting down of forces. Hundreds of employes are dismissed Christmas eve in every large store. A few of these workers will be reëngaged December 27 or 28 and kept through the January sales. A toy department that has normally 12 women, had 350 just before Christmas. About three hundred are dismissed December 24 and the others are gradually dropped during the next month until reduction sales and stock inventory are over. In March or April again extra workers will be taken on for two or three months.

Upon the examination of the records of 456 saleswomen in one store, for a period of 16 weeks from June to September, it was found that many saleswomen take some voluntary vacation beyond the paid week. The better paid women are out from one to nine weeks. The group considered had all been in the employ of the house at least one year and they averaged $7\frac{1}{2}$ days' absence beyond their paid vacations in this summer season alone. Of those who were earning \$8 and above, the largest proportion, or 55 per cent, were out one week and more beyond

the paid week, as against only 40 per cent of those earning under \$8. In one department store regular saleswomen and six-day contingent sellers are given only three days' work a week in slack seasons.

Despite this great irregularity of employment that appears on the surface, department store unemployment is made less serious in that a number of those laid off at the Christmas season regularly return to other work, which they have temporarily left in a slack season. For example, many of the stores keep a list of addresses of people whom it regularly calls on during the rush seasons. The help needed in certain departments is drawn from the wholesale departments of the store to the toy, book, jewelry, etc., departments who need extra help. The second large source of help is by securing traveling men who usually are not very busy during December. The busy season of these persons comes while the stores are stocking up before the Christmas rush. A man who, for example, has been a traveling jewelry salesman, then becomes a jewelry salesman in the department store, etc. In the third place, department stores secure help at Christmas from the small tailoring shops, whose busy season just precedes that of the department stores. Moreover, many of those laid off at the end of a busy season are persons such as married women, school students, etc., who utilize this opportunity to earn some "pin" money. Although a considerable amount of time may be lost by those laid off by the stores before they are needed at their old positions, department store unemployment is made less serious by this dovetailing of trades which assures steadier employment.

H. Labor Union Statements

In order to throw as much light as possible on the amount of unemployment in Philadelphia industries, letters were sent by the Director of Public Works to each union affiliated with the Central Labor Union. One of the questions in the letter asked the amount of time lost by the average member. This query was designed to indicate the amount of normal unemployment there was in different trades. Unions were asked to answer this question only if they had records. The tabulated results of the limited number of answers received are as follows:

Union No.	Time annually lost by average member
1	About 8 months (only those temporarily employed considered)
2	4 months
3	10-12 days
4	2 months
5	3 days a week
6	half time
7	7 months
8	3 months
9	none
10	2 months
11	about 2 months

These answers represent but a small percentage of the labor unions in Philadelphia. As a rule, we may assume that those with the largest amount of unemployment were most ready to answer. Even allowing for this and for any mistakes in the estimates, the abundance of unemployment is apparent.

I. Miscellaneous Industries

The preceding is not intended as a complete statement of unemployment and irregularity of employment in Philadelphia industries. Only the largest of those in which unsteadiness of employment exists were selected. A long list of industries might be named, in which, for one reason or another, conditions are much the same. Surely enough has been said to prove the existence in Philadelphia (and probably any other industrial center) of a serious unemployment situation—firmly rooted, growing, detrimental to employer, worker and community, even in the best of industrial years.